

# **Critique of the Gotha Programme**

**Karl Marx**



# Critique of the Gotha Programme

By Karl Marx

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## Foreword by Friedrich Engels

The manuscript published here—the covering letter to Bracke as well as the critique of the draft programme—was sent in 1875, shortly before the Gotha Unity Congress, to Bracke for communication to Geib, Auer, Bebel, and Liebknecht and subsequent return to Marx. Since the Halle Party Congress has put the discussion of the Gotha Programme on the agenda of the party, I think I would be guilty of suppression if I any longer withheld from publicity this important—perhaps the most important—document relevant to this discussion.

But the manuscript has yet another and more far-reaching significance. Here for the first time Marx's attitude to the line adopted by Lassalle in his agitation from the very

beginning is clearly and firmly set forth, both as regards Lassalle's economic principles and his tactics.

The ruthless severity with which the draft programme is dissected here, the mercilessness with which the results obtained are enunciated and the shortcomings of the draft laid bare—all this today, after fifteen years, can no longer give offense. Specific Lassalleans now exist only abroad as isolated ruins, and in Halle the Gotha Programme was given up even by its creators as altogether inadequate.

Nevertheless, I have omitted a few sharp personal expressions and judgments where these were immaterial, and replaced them by dots. Marx himself would have done so if he had published the manuscript today. The violence of the language in some passages was provoked by two circumstances. In the first place, Marx and I had been more intimately connected with the German movement than with any other; we were, therefore, bound to be particularly perturbed by the decidedly retrograde step manifested by this draft programme. And secondly, we were at that time, hardly two years after the Hague Congress of the International, engaged in the most violent struggle against Bakunin and his anarchists, who made us responsible for everything that happened in the labour movement in Germany; hence we had to expect that we would also be saddled with the secret paternity of this programme. These considerations do not now exist and so there is no necessity for the passages in question.

For reasons of censorship, a few sentences have been indicated only by dots. Where I have had to choose a milder expression this has been enclosed in square brackets. Otherwise the text has been reproduced word for word.

London, January 6, 1891

*Fr. Engels*

## **Marx's Letter to Wilhelm Bracke**

Dear Bracke,

Will you be so kind, after you have read the following marginal notes on the unity programme, to pass them on for Geib and Auer, Bebel and Liebknecht to see. Notabene. *The manuscript should be returned to you* so as to be at my disposal if needs be. I have more than enough to do, and, as it is, must take on far more work than laid down for me by my doctor. Hence it was by no means a “pleasure” to write such a lengthy screed. Yet it was necessary if the steps I shall have to take later on are not to be misinterpreted by the party friends for whom this communication is intended.

After the Unity Congress is over, Engels and I will publish a short statement to the effect that we entirely disassociate ourselves from the said programme of principles and have nothing to do with it.

This is indispensable because of the view taken abroad—a totally erroneous view, carefully nurtured by party enemies—that we are secretly directing the activities of the so-called Eisenach Party from here. Only recently, in a newly published Russian work, Bakunin suggests that I, for instance, am responsible, not only for that party's every programme, etc., but actually for every step taken by Liebknecht from the day he began co-operating with the People's Party.

Aside from this, it is my duty to refuse recognition, even by maintaining a diplomatic silence, to a programme which, I am convinced, is altogether deplorable as well as demoralizing for the party.

Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes. Hence, if it was impossible to advance *beyond* the Eisenach Programme—and circumstances at the time precluded this—they should simply have come to an agreement about action against the common foe. But to draw up programmes of principles (instead of waiting till a longish spell of common activity has prepared the ground for that sort of thing) is to set up bench marks for all the world to see, whereby it may gauge how far the party has progressed.

The leaders of the Lassalleans came because circumstances forced them to. Had they been told from the start that there was to be no haggling over principles, they would have been *compelled* to content themselves with a programme of action or a plan of organization for common action. Instead, our people allow them to present themselves armed with mandates, and recognize those mandates as binding, thus surrendering unconditionally to men who are themselves in need of help. To crown it all, they are holding another congress *prior to the congress of compromise*, whereas our own party is holding its congress *post festum*. Obviously their idea was to elude all criticism and not allow their own party time for reflection. One knows that the mere fact of unification is enough to satisfy the workers, but it is wrong to suppose that this momentary success has not been bought too dear.

Besides, the programme's no good, even apart from its canonization of the Lassalleian articles of faith.

I shall shortly be sending you the final installments of the French edition of *Capital*. Printing was held up for a considerable time by the French government ban. The thing will be finished this week or at the beginning of next. Have you received the six previous installments? Would you also

very kindly send me the *address* of Bernhard Becker, to whom I must likewise send the final installments.

The *bookshop* of the *Volksstaat* has peculiar manners. For instance, they haven't as yet sent me so much as a single copy of their reprint of the *Cologne Communist Trial*.

With kind regards

Your, *Karl Marx*

## **Marginal Notes on the Programme of the German Workers' Party**

### **I**

1. "Labor is the source of wealth and all culture, *and since* useful labor is possible only in society and through society, the proceeds of labor belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society."

*First part of the paragraph:* "Labor is the source of all wealth and all culture."

Labor is *not the source* of all wealth. *Nature* is just as much the source of use values (and it is surely of such that material wealth consists!) as labor, which itself is only the manifestation of a force of nature, human labor power. The above phrase is to be found in all children's primers and is correct insofar as it is *implied* that labor is performed with the pertinent objects and instruments. But a socialist programme cannot allow such bourgeois phrases to pass over in silence the *conditions* that alone give them meaning. And insofar as man from the outset behaves toward nature, the primary source of all instruments and subjects of labor, as an owner, treats her as belonging to him, his labor

becomes the source of use values, therefore also of wealth. The bourgeois have very good grounds for falsely ascribing *supernatural creative power* to labor; since precisely from the fact that labor depends on nature, it follows that the man who possesses no other property than his labor power must, in all conditions of society and culture, be the slave of other men who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labor. He can only work with their permission, hence live only with their permission.

Let us now leave the sentence as it stands, or rather limps. What could one have expected in conclusion? Obviously this:

“Since labor is the source of all wealth, no one in society can appropriate wealth except as the product of labor. Therefore, if he himself does not work, he lives by the labor of others and also acquires his culture at the expense of the labor of others.”

Instead of this, by means of the verbal rivet “and since” a second proposition is added in order to draw a conclusion from this and not from the first one.

*Second part of the paragraph:* “Useful labor is possible only in society and through society.”

According to the first proposition, labor was the source of all wealth and all culture; therefore no society is possible without labor. Now we learn, conversely, that no ‘useful’ labor is possible without society.

One could just as well have said that only in society can useless and even socially harmful labor become a branch of gainful occupation, that only in society can one live by being idle, etc., etc.—in short, one could just as well have copied the whole of Rousseau.



And what is “useful” labor? Surely only labor which produces the intended useful result. A savage—and man was a savage after he had ceased to be an ape—who kills an animal with a stone, who collects fruit, etc., performs “useful” labor.

*Thirdly, the conclusion:* “And since useful labor is possible only in society and through society, the proceeds of labor belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society.”

A fine conclusion! If useful labor is possible only in society and through society, the proceeds of labor belong to society—and only so much therefrom accrues to the individual worker as is not required to maintain the “condition” of labor, society.

In fact, this proposition has at all times been made use of *by the champions of the state of society prevailing at any given time*. First come the claims of the government and everything that sticks to it, since it is the social organ for the maintenance of the social order; then comes the claims of the various kinds of private owners for the various kinds of private property are the foundations of society, etc. One sees that such hollow phrases can be twisted and turned as desired.

The first and second parts of the paragraph have some intelligible connection only in the following wording:

“Labor becomes the source of wealth and culture only as social labor”, or, what is the same thing, “in and through society”.

This proposition is incontestably correct, for although isolated labor (its material conditions presupposed) can create use value, it can create neither wealth nor culture.

But equally incontestable is the other proposition:

“In proportion as labor develops socially, and becomes thereby a source of wealth and culture, poverty and destitution develop among the workers, and wealth and culture among the non-workers.”

This is the law of all history hitherto. What, therefore, had to be done here, instead of setting down general phrases about “*labor*” and “*society*”, was to prove concretely how in present capitalist society the material, etc., conditions have at last been created which enable and compel the workers to lift this historical curse.

In fact, however, the whole paragraph, bungled in style and content, is only there in order to inscribe the Lassalleian catchword of the “undiminished proceeds of labor” as a slogan at the top of the party banner. I shall return later to the “proceeds of labor”, “equal right”, etc., since the same thing recurs in a somewhat different form further on.

1. “In present-day society, the instruments of labor are the monopoly of the capitalist class; the resulting dependence of the working class is the cause of misery and servitude in all forms.”

This sentence, borrowed from the Rules of the International, is incorrect in this “improved” edition.

In present-day society, the instruments of labor are the monopoly of the landowners (the monopoly of property in land is even the basis of the monopoly of capital) *and* the capitalists. In the passage in question, the Rules of the International do not mention either one or the other class of monopolists. They speak of the “*monopolizer of the means of labor, that is, the sources of life.*” The addition, “sources

of life”, makes it sufficiently clear that land is included in the means of labor.

The correction was introduced because Lassalle, for reasons now generally known, attacked *only* the capitalist class and not the landowners. In England, the capitalist class is usually not even the owner of the land on which his factory stands.

1. “The emancipation of labor demands the raising of the means of labor to the common property of society and the collective regulation of the total labor, with a fair distribution of the proceeds of labor.”

“Raising of the means of labor to the common property”! Ought obviously to read their “conversion into the common property”. But this only in passing.

What are the “*proceeds of labor*”? The product of labor or its value? And in the latter case, is it the total value of the product or only that part of the value which labor has newly added to the value of the means of production consumed?

“Proceeds of labor” is a loose notion which Lassalle has put in the place of definite economic conceptions.

What is “fair” distribution?

Do not the bourgeois assert that the present-day distribution is “fair”? And is it not, in fact, the only “fair” distribution on the basis of the present-day mode of production? Are economic relations regulated by legal conceptions or do not, on the contrary, legal relations arise from economic ones? Have not also the socialist sectarians the most varied notions about “fair” distribution?

To understand what is implied in this connection by the phrase “fair distribution”, we must take the first paragraph and this one together. The latter presupposes a society wherein the “means of labor are common property and the total labor is collectively regulated”, and from the first paragraph we learn that “the proceeds of labor belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society”.

“To all members of society”? To those who do not work as well? What remains then of the “undiminished proceeds of labor”? Only to those members of society who work? What remains then of the “equal right” of all members of society?

But “all members of society” and “equal right” are obviously mere phrases. The crucial point is this, that in this communist society every worker must receive the “undiminished” Lassalleian “proceeds of labor”.

Let us take, first of all, the words “proceeds of labor” in the sense of the product of labor; then the collective proceeds of labor are the *total social product*.

From this must now be deducted:

*First*, cover for replacement of the means of production used up.

*Second*, additional portion for expansion of production.

*Third*, reserve or insurance funds to provide against accidents, dislocations caused by natural factors, etc.

These deductions from the “undiminished proceeds of labor” are an economic necessity and their magnitude is to be determined according to available means and forces, and partly by computation of probabilities, but they are in no way calculable by equity.

There remains the other part of the total product, intended to serve as means of consumption.

Before this is divided among the individuals, there has to be deducted again from it:

*First, the general costs of administration not belonging to production.*

This part will, from the outset, be very considerably restricted in comparison with present-day society, and it diminishes in proportion as the new society develops.

*Second, that which is intended for the common satisfaction of needs, such as schools, health services, etc.*

From the outset this part grows considerably in comparison with present-day society, and it grows in proportion as the new society develops.

*Third, funds for those unable to work, etc., in short, for what is included under so-called official poor relief today.*

Only now do we come to the “distribution” which the programme, under Lassallean influence, has alone in view in its narrow fashion, namely, to that part of the means of consumption which is divided among the individual producers of the collective.

The “undiminished proceeds of labor” have already unnoticeably become converted into the “diminished” proceeds, although what the producer is deprived of in his capacity as a private individual benefits him directly or indirectly in his capacity as a member of society.

Just as the phrase of the “undiminished proceeds of labor” has disappeared, so now does the phrase of the “proceeds of

labor” disappear altogether.

Within the collective society based on common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products; just as little does the labor employed on the products appear here as the *value* of these products, as a material quality possessed by them, since now, in contrast to capitalist society, individual labor no longer exists in an indirect fashion but directly as a component part of total labor. The phrase “proceeds of labor”, objectionable even today on account of its ambiguity, thus loses all meaning.

What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has *developed* on its own foundations, but on the contrary, just as it *emerges* from capitalist society, which is thus in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges. Accordingly, the individual producer receives back from society—after the deductions have been made—exactly what he gives to it. What he has given to it is his individual quantum of labor. For example, the social working day consists of the sum of the individual hours of work; the individual labor time of the individual producer is the part of the social working day contributed by him, his share in it. He receives a certificate from society that he has furnished such-and-such an amount of labor (after deducting his labor for the common funds); and with this certificate, he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as the same amount of labor cost. The same amount of labor which he has given to society in one form, he receives back in another.

Here, obviously, the same principle prevails as that which regulates the exchange of commodities, as far as this is exchange of equal values. Content and form are changed, because under the altered circumstances no one can give

anything except his labor, and because, on the other hand, nothing can pass to the ownership of individuals, except individual means of consumption. But as far as the distribution of the latter among the individual producers is concerned, the same principle prevails as in the exchange of commodity equivalents: a given amount of labor in one form is exchanged for an equal amount of labor in another form.

Hence, *equal right* here is still in principle—*bourgeois right*, although principle and practice are no longer at loggerheads, while the exchange of equivalents in commodity exchange exists only *on the average* and not in the individual case.

In spite of this advance, this *equal right* is still constantly encumbered by a bourgeois limitation. The right of the producers is *proportional* to the labor they supply; the equality consists in the fact that measurement is made with an *equal standard*, labor. But one man is superior to another physically, or mentally, and supplies more labor in the same time, or can labor for a longer time; and labor, to serve as a measure, must be defined by its duration or intensity, otherwise it ceases to be a standard of measurement. This *equal right* is an unequal right for unequal labor. It recognizes no class differences, because everyone is only a worker like everyone else; but it tacitly recognizes unequal individual endowment, and thus productive capacity, as natural privileges. It is, *therefore, a right of inequality, in its content, like every right*. Right by its very nature can consist only in the application of an equal standard; but unequal individuals (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal) are measurable only by an equal standard insofar as they are made subject to an equal criterion, are taken from a *certain* side only—for instance, in the present case, are regarded *only as workers* and nothing more is seen in them, everything else being ignored.

Besides, one worker is married, another is not; one has more children than another, and so on and so forth. Thus, given an equal amount of work done, and hence an equal in the social consumption fund, one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so on. To avoid all these defects, right would have to be unequal rather than equal.

But these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged after prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society. Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development which this determines.

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!

I have dealt more at length with the “undiminished” proceeds of labor, on the one hand, and with “equal right” and “fair distribution”, on the other, in order to show what a crime it is to attempt, on the one hand, to force on our Party again, as dogmas, ideas which in a certain period had some meaning but have now become obsolete verbal rubbish, while again perverting, on the other, the realistic outlook, which it cost so much effort to instill into the Party but which has now taken root in it, by means of ideological, legal and



other trash so common among the Democrats and French Socialists.

Quite apart from the analysis so far given, it was in general a mistake to make a fuss about so-called *distribution* and put the principal stress on it.

Any distribution whatever of the means of consumption is only a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves. The latter distribution, however, is a feature of the mode of production itself. The capitalist mode of production, for example, rests on the fact that the material conditions of production are in the hands of non-workers in the form of property in capital and land, while the masses are only owners of the personal condition of production, of labor power. If the elements of production are so distributed, then the present-day distribution of the means of consumption results automatically. If the material conditions of production are the collective property of the workers themselves, then there likewise results a distribution of the means of consumption different from the present one. The vulgar socialists (and from it in turn a section of the Democrats) has taken over from the bourgeois economists the consideration and treatment of distribution as independent of the mode of production and hence the presentation of socialism as turning principally on distribution. After the real relation has long been made clear, why retrogress again?

1. "The emancipation of labor must be the work of the working class, in relation to which all other classes are *only one reactionary mass*."

The main clause is taken from the introductory words of the Rules of the International, but "improved". There it is said: "The emancipation of the working class must be the act of

the workers themselves”; here, on the contrary, the “working class” “has to emancipate—what? “Labor”. Let him understand who can.

In compensation, the subordinate clause, on the other hand, is a Lassallean quotation of the first water: “in relation to which (the working class) all other classes are *only one reactionary mass*”.

In the *Communist Manifesto* it is said: “Of all the classes that stand face-to-face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a *really revolutionary class*. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product.”

The bourgeoisie is here conceived as a revolutionary class—as the bearer of large-scale industry—relative to the feudal lords and the middle estates, who desire to maintain all social positions that are the creation of obsolete modes of production. Thus, they do not form *together with the bourgeoisie* only one reactionary mass.

On the other hand, the proletariat is revolutionary in relation to the bourgeoisie because, having itself grown up on the basis of large-scale industry, it strives to strip off from production the capitalist character that the bourgeoisie seeks to perpetuate. But the *Manifesto* adds that the “middle estates” are becoming revolutionary “in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat”.

From this point of view, therefore, it is again nonsense to say that they, “together with the bourgeoisie”, and with the feudal lords into the bargain, “form only one reactionary mass” in relation to the working class.

Did anyone proclaim to the artisan, small manufacturers, etc., and *peasants* during the last elections: In relation to us

you, together with the bourgeoisie and feudal lords, form only one reactionary mass?

Lassalle knew the *Communist Manifesto* by heart, as his faithful followers know the gospels written by him. If, therefore, he has falsified it so grossly, this has occurred only to put a good color on his alliance with absolutist and feudal opponents against the bourgeoisie.

In the above paragraph, moreover, his oracular saying is dragged in by the hair without any connection with the botched quotation from the Rules of the International. Thus, it is here simply an impertinence, and indeed not at all displeasing to Herr Bismarck, one of those cheap pieces of insolence in which the Marat of Berlin deals. (Marat of Berlin a reference to Hasselmann, chief editor of the *Neuer Social-Demokrat*—note from MIA edition.)

1. “The working class strives for its emancipation *first of all within the framework of the present-day national state*, conscious that the necessary result of its efforts, which are common to the workers of all civilized countries, will be the international brotherhood of peoples.”

Lassalle, in opposition to the *Communist Manifesto* and to all earlier socialism, conceived the workers' movement from the narrowest national standpoint. He is being followed in this—and that after the work of the International!

It is altogether self-evident that, to be able to fight at all, the working class must organize itself at home *as a class* and that its own country is the immediate arena of its struggle. To this extent its class struggle is national, not in substance, but, as the *Communist Manifesto* says, “in form”. But the “framework of the present-day national state”, for instance, the German Empire, is itself, in its turn, economically “within

the framework” of the world market, politically “within the framework of the system of states”. Every businessman knows that German trade is at the same time foreign trade, and the greatness of Herr Bismarck consists, to be sure, precisely in his pursuing a kind of *international* policy.

And to what does the German workers' party reduce its internationalism? To the consciousness that the result of its efforts will be “the international brotherhood of peoples”—a phrase borrowed from the bourgeois League of Peace and Freedom, which is intended to pass as equivalent to the international brotherhood of working classes in the joint struggle against the ruling classes and their governments. So not a word *about the international functions* of the German working class! And it is thus that it is to defy its own bourgeoisie—which is already linked up in brotherhood against it with the bourgeois of all other countries—and Herr Bismarck's international policy of conspiracy!

In fact, the internationalism of the programme stands *even infinitely below* that of the Free Trade Party. The latter also asserts that the result of its efforts will be “the international brotherhood of peoples”. But it also *does* something to make trade international and by no means contents itself with the consciousness that all people are carrying on trade at home.

The international activity of the working classes does not in any way depend on the existence of the “*International Working Men's Association*”. This was only the first attempt to create a central organ for the activity; an attempt which was a lasting success on account of the impulse which it gave, but which was no longer realizable in *its historical form* after the fall of the Paris Commune.

Bismarck's *Norddeutsche* was absolutely right when it announced, to the satisfaction of its master, that the

German Workers' party had sworn off internationalism in the new programme.

## II

“Starting from these basic principles, the German workers' party strives by all legal means for the *free state*—and—socialist society: that abolition of the wage system *together with the iron law of wages*—and—exploitation in every form; the elimination of all social and political inequality.”

I shall return to the “free” state later.

So, in future, the German workers' party has got to believe in Lassalle's “iron law of wages”! That this may not be lost, the nonsense is perpetrated of speaking of the “abolition of the wage system” (it should read: system of wage labor) “*together with the iron law of wages*”. If I abolish wage labor, then naturally I abolish its laws too, whether they are of “iron” or sponge. But Lassalle's attack on wage labor turns almost solely on this so-called law. In order, therefore, to prove that Lassalle's sect has won, the “wage system” must be abolished “*together with the iron law of wages*” and not without it.

It is well known that nothing of the “iron law of wages” is Lassalle's except the word “iron” borrowed from Goethe's “great, eternal iron laws”. The word *iron* is a label by which the true believers recognize one another. But if I take the law with Lassalle's stamp on it and, consequently, in his sense, then I must also take it with his substantiation. And what is that? As Lange already showed, shortly after Lassalle's death, it is the Malthusian theory of population (preached by Lange himself). But if this theory is correct, then again I *cannot* abolish the law even if I abolish wage labor a hundred times over, because the law then governs

not only the system of wage labor but *every* social system. Basing themselves directly on this, the economists have been proving for fifty years and more that socialism cannot abolish poverty, *which has its basis in nature*, but can only make it *general*, distribute it simultaneously over the whole surface of society!

But all this is not the main thing. *Quite apart* from the *false* Lassallean formulation of the law, the truly outrageous retrogression consists in the following:

Since Lassalle's death, there has asserted itself in *our* party the scientific understanding that *wages* are not what they *appear* to be, namely, the *value*, or *price*, of *labor*, but only a masked form for the *value*, or *price*, of *labor power*. Thereby, the whole bourgeois conception of wages hitherto, as well as all the criticism hitherto directed against this conception, was thrown overboard once and for all and it was made clear that the wage-worker has permission to work for his own subsistence, that is, *to live* only insofar as he works for a certain time gratis for the capitalist (and hence also for the latter's co-consumers of surplus value); that the whole capitalist system of production turns on the increase of this gratis labor by extending the working day or by developing the productivity, that is, increasing the intensity or labor power, etc.; that, consequently, the system of wage labor is a system of slavery, and indeed of a slavery which becomes more severe in proportion as the social productive forces of labor develop, whether the worker receives better or worse payment. And after this understanding has gained more and more ground in our party, some return to Lassalle's dogma although they must have known that Lassalle *did not know* what wages were, but, following in the wake of the bourgeois economists, took the appearance for the essence of the matter.

It is as if, among slaves who have at last got behind the secret of slavery and broken out in rebellion, a slave still in thrall to obsolete notions were to inscribe on the programme of the rebellion: Slavery must be abolished because the feeding of slaves in the system of slavery cannot exceed a certain low maximum!

Does not the mere fact that the representatives of our Party were capable of perpetrating such a monstrous attack on the understanding that has spread among the mass of our Party prove by itself with what criminal levity and with what lack of conscience they set to work in drawing up this compromise programme!

Instead of the indefinite concluding phrase of the paragraph, "the elimination of all social and political inequality", it ought to have been said that with the abolition of class distinctions all social and political inequality arising from them would disappear of itself.

### III

*"The German Workers' party, in order to pave the way to the solution of the social question, demands the establishment of producers' co-operative societies with state aid under the democratic control of the working people. The producers' co-operative societies are to be called into being for industry and agriculture on such a scale that the socialist organization of the total labor will arise from them."*

After the Lassallean "iron law of wages", the panacea of the prophet. The way for it is "paved" in worthy fashion. In place of the existing class struggle appears a newspaper scribbler's phrase: "*the social question*", to the "*solution*" of which one "paves the way". Instead of arising from the revolutionary process of transformation of society, the

“socialist organization of the total labor” “arises” from the “state aid” that the state gives to the producers’ co-operative societies and which the *state*, not the workers, “*calls into being*”. It is worthy of Lassalle's imagination that with state loans one can build a new society just as well as a new railway!

From the remnants of a sense of shame, “state aid” has been put—“under the democratic control of the working people”.

In the first place, the majority of the “working people” in Germany consists of peasants, not proletarians.

Second, “democratic” means in German “*volksherrschaftlich*” [by the rule of the people]. But what does “control of the working people by the rule of the people” mean? And particularly in the case of working people who, through these demands that they put to the state, express their full consciousness that they neither rule nor is ripe for rule!

It would be superfluous to deal here with the criticism of the recipe prescribed by Buchez in the reign of Louis Philippe, in *opposition* to the French socialists and accepted by the reactionary workers, of the *Atelier*. The chief offense does not lie in having inscribed this specific nostrum in the programme, but in taking, in general, a retrograde step from the standpoint of a class movement to that of a sectarian movement.

That the workers desire to establish the conditions for co-operative production on a social scale, and first of all on a national scale, in their own country, only means that they are working to transform the present conditions of production, and it has nothing in common with the foundation of co-operative societies with state aid. But as far



as the present co-operative societies are concerned, they are of value *only* insofar as they are the independent creations of the workers and not protégés either of the governments or of the bourgeois.

## IV

I come now to the democratic section.

### A. *"The free basis of the state."*

First of all, according to II, the German workers' party strives for "the free state".

Free state—what is this?

It is by no means the purpose of the workers, who have got rid of the narrow mentality of humble subjects, to set the state "free". In the German Empire, the "state" is almost as "free" as in Russia. Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it, and even today forms of state are more free or less free to the extent that they restrict the "freedom of the state".

The German workers' party—at least if it adopts the programme—shows that its socialist ideas are not even skin-deep, in that, instead of treating existing society (and this holds good for any future one) as the *basis* of the existing *state* (or of the future state in the case of future society), it treats the state rather as an independent entity that possesses its own *"intellectual, ethical, and libertarian bases"*.

And what of the wild abuse which the programme makes of the words *"present-day state"*, *"present-day society"*, and of

the still more riotous misconception it creates in regard to the state to which it addresses its demands?

“Present-day society” is capitalist society, which exists in all civilized countries, more or less free from medieval admixture, more or less modified by the particular historical development of each country, more or less developed. On the other hand, the “present-day state” changes with a country's frontier. It is different in the Prusso-German Empire from that in Switzerland, and different in England from that in the United States. “The *present-day state*” is, therefore, a fiction.

Nevertheless, the different states of the different civilized countries, in spite of their motley diversity of form, all have this in common that they are based on modern bourgeois society, more or less capitalistically developed. They have, therefore, also certain essential characteristics in common. In this sense, it is possible to speak of the “present-day state” in contrast with the future, in which its present root, bourgeois society, will have died off.

The question then arises: what transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present state functions? This question can only be answered scientifically, and one does not get a flea-hop nearer to the problem by a thousandfold combination of the word “people” with the word “state”.

Between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.

Now the programme deals neither with this nor with the future state of communist society.

Its political demands contain nothing beyond the old democratic litany familiar to all: universal suffrage, direct legislation, popular rights, a people's militia, etc. They are a mere echo of the bourgeois People's Party, of the League of Peace and Freedom. They are all demands which, insofar as they are not exaggerated in fantastic presentation, have already been *realized*. Only the state to which they belong does not lie within the borders of the German Empire, but in Switzerland, the United States, etc. This sort of "state of the future" is a *present-day state*, although existing outside the "framework" of the German Empire.

But one thing has been forgotten. Since the German workers' party expressly declares that it acts within "the present-day national state", hence within its own state, the Prusso-German Empire—its demands would indeed be otherwise largely meaningless, since one only demands what one has not got—it should not have forgotten the chief thing, namely, that all those pretty little gewgaws rest on the recognition of what is called sovereignty of the people and hence are appropriate only in a *democratic republic*.

Since one has not the courage—and wisely so, for the circumstances demand caution—to demand the democratic republic, as the French workers' programmes under Louis Philippe and under Louis Napoleon did, one should not have resorted, either, to the subterfuge, neither "honest" nor decent, of demanding things which have meaning only in a democratic republic from a state which is nothing but a police-guarded military despotism, embellished with parliamentary forms, alloyed with a feudal admixture and at the same time already influenced by the bourgeoisie, and bureaucratically carpentered, and then assuring this state

into the bargain that one imagines one will be able to force such things upon it “by legal means”.

Even vulgar democracy, which sees the millennium in the democratic republic, and has no suspicion that it is precisely in this last form of state of bourgeois society that the class struggle has to be fought out to a conclusion—even it towers mountains above this kind of democratism which keeps within the limits of what is permitted by the police and not permitted by logic.

That, in fact, by the word “state” is meant the government machine or the state insofar as it forms a special organism separated from society through division of labor, is shown by the words “the German workers’ party demands *as the economic basis of the state*: a single progressive income tax,” etc.

Taxes are the economic basis of the government machinery and of nothing else. In the state of the future existing in Switzerland, this demand has been pretty well fulfilled. Income tax presupposes various sources of income of the various social classes, and hence capitalist society. It is, therefore, nothing remarkable that the Liverpool Financial Reformers, bourgeois headed by Gladstone’s brother, are putting forward the same demand as the programme.

B. “The German workers’ party demands as the intellectual and ethical basis of the state:

1. “Universal and *equal education of the people* by the state. Universal compulsory school attendance. Free instruction.”

*Equal education of the people?* What idea lies behind these words? Is it believed that in present-day society (and it is only with this one has to deal) education can be *equal* for all

classes? Or is it demanded that the upper classes also shall be compulsorily reduced to the modicum of education—the elementary school—that alone is compatible with the economic conditions not only of the wage-workers but of the peasants as well?

“Universal compulsory school attendance. Free instruction”. The former exists even in Germany, the second in Switzerland and in the United States in the case of elementary schools. If in some states of the latter country higher education institutions are also “free”, that only means in fact defraying the cost of education of the upper classes from the general tax receipts. Incidentally, the same holds good for “free administration of justice” demanded under A, 5. The administration of criminal justice is to be had free everywhere; that of civil justice is concerned almost exclusively with conflicts over property and hence affects almost exclusively the propertied classes. Are they to carry on their litigation at the expense of the national coffers?

The paragraph on the schools should at least have demanded technical schools (theoretical and practical) in combination with the elementary school.

*“Education of the people by the state”* is altogether objectionable. Defining by a general law the expenditures on the elementary schools, the qualifications of the teaching staff, the branches of instruction, etc., and, as is done in the United States, supervising the fulfillment of these legal specifications by state inspectors, is a very different thing from appointing the state as the educator of the people! Government and church should rather be equally excluded from any influence on the school. Particularly, indeed, in the Prusso-German Empire (and one should not take refuge in the rotten subterfuge that one is speaking of a “state of the future”; we have seen how matters stand in this respect) the

state has need, on the contrary, of a very stern education by the people.

But the whole programme, for all its democratic clang, is tainted through and through by the Lassalleian sect's servile belief in the state, or, what is no better, by a democratic belief in miracles; or rather it is a compromise between these two kinds of belief in miracles, both equally remote from socialism.

"Freedom of science" says paragraph of the Prussian Constitution. Why, then, here?

*"Freedom of conscience"*! If one desired, at this time of the *Kulturkampf* to remind liberalism of its old catchwords, it surely could have been done only in the following form: Everyone should be able to attend his religious as well as his bodily needs without the police sticking their noses in. But the workers' party ought, at any rate in this connection, to have expressed its awareness of the fact that bourgeois "freedom of conscience" is nothing but the toleration of all possible kinds of *religious freedom of conscience*, and that for its part it endeavors rather to liberate the conscience from the witchery of religion. But one chooses not to transgress the "bourgeois" level.

I have now come to the end, for the appendix that now follows in the programme does not constitute a characteristic component part of it. Hence, I can be very brief.

### 1. *"Normal working day."*

In no other country has the workers' party limited itself to such a vague demand, but has always fixed the length of the working day that it considers normal under the given circumstances.

1. "Restriction of female labor and prohibition of child labor."

The standardization of the working day must include the restriction of female labor, insofar as it relates to the duration, intermissions, etc., of the working day; otherwise, it could only mean the exclusion of female labor from branches of industry that are especially unhealthy for the female body, or are morally objectionable to the female sex. If that is what was meant, it should have been said so.

*"Prohibition of child labor"*! Here it is absolutely essential to state the *age limit*.

A *general prohibition* of child labor is incompatible with the existence of large-scale industry and hence an empty, pious wish. Its realization—if it were possible—would be reactionary, since, with a strict regulation of the working time according to the different age groups and other safety measures for the protection of children, an early combination of productive labor with education is one of the most potent means for the transformation of present-day society.

1. "State supervision of factory, workshop, and domestic industry."

In consideration of the Prusso-German state, it should definitely have been demanded that the inspectors are to be removable only by a court of law; that any worker can have them prosecuted for neglect of duty; that they must belong to the medical profession.

1. "Regulation of prison labor."

A petty demand in a general workers' programme. In any case, it should have been clearly stated that there is no

intention from fear of competition to allow ordinary criminals to be treated like beasts, and especially that there is no desire to deprive them of their sole means of betterment, productive labor. This was surely the least one might have expected from socialists.

1. “An effective liability law.”

It should have been stated what is meant by an “effective” liability law.

Be it noted, incidentally, that in speaking of the normal working day the part of factory legislation that deals with health regulations and safety measures, etc., has been overlooked. The liability law comes into operation only when these regulations are infringed.

In short, this appendix also is distinguished by slovenly editing.

*Dixi et salvavi animam meam.* (Tr.—I have spoken and saved my soul.)